



Bio information: **THE FOURTH WORLD QUARTET**  
Title: **1975** (Cuneiform Rune 481)  
Format: CD / DIGITAL  
FILE UNDER: **JAZZ / CLASSICAL / IMPROVISATION / COMPOSITION**

**The Upcoming Cuneiform Archival Release**  
**1975**  
by  
**THE FOURTH WORLD QUARTET**  
**Uncovers a Missing Piece of an Early Story about a Pivotal Time Period in Music History**  
**That Expanded Not Long Afterwards**

**Its Members Going from 60s Exploratory Psychedelia to**  
**Detroit's Experimental Art/Punk**  
**DESTROY ALL MONSTERS [featuring members of STOOGES and MC5] and**  
**Boston's MISSION OF BURMA and BIRDSONGS OF THE MESOZOIC**

**Benjamin Miller:** alto saxophone, electric guitar, composer  
**Laurence Miller:** bass clarinet, composer  
**Roger C. Miller:** piano, percussion, cornet, composer  
**Jack Waterstone:** alto saxophone, composer

The brothers **Miller** grew up in Ann Arbor, Michigan. They came of age during the Summer of Love when revolution and the White Panthers were livening up their hometown. They formed their first band together in 1967, covering 13th Floor Elevators and Mothers of Invention. Two years later they were engaged in freeform rock improvisations and started their first all-original rock band **Sproton Layer**. Their summer 1970 recording, "With Magnetic Fields Disrupted", was released in 2012 on the German label World in Sound. During this time, they would see the MC5 at a free concert in the afternoon, then head over to the University of Michigan New Music department to hear Stockhausen at night. John Sinclair's Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festival a couple years later definitely had an impact on their world-view.

In 1975 the three brothers attended Thomas Jefferson College, a small Art School in the middle of Michigan. **Benjamin** and **Laurence** had recently absorbed the advanced jazz of Eric Dolphy and Anthony Braxton while at school in Boston, playing in the Nova Mob with Don Davis (later of Microscopic Septet). **Roger** had maintained an active interest in the music of Bela Bartok and Igor Stravinsky in Ann Arbor.

The Fourth World Quartet, with school-mate **Jack Waterstone** rounding out the quartet, was born out of this mash-up of free improvisation, classical music and jazz. All members composed, ranging from fully scored pieces to graphic scores or mere verbal instruction. Laurence arranged the **Art Ensemble of Chicago's** "Tnoona" for the group and Roger arranged the main theme from **Igor Stravinsky's** mini-opera "Renard the Fox". The boundaries were wide.

Three horns and a piano is already unusual, but add Benjamin's post-psychedelic guitar work and Roger's occasional "wall-of-piano" stylings, and things definitely stepped out of any traditional ensemble setting. Gentle melodies bump up against atonal bebop. Tightly structured forms contrast immediately with open improvisation. Wailing horns blaze over contained piano ostinati.

In a few months the band put together this repertoire, a testament to focus and extreme creative activity. If they only played two shows and lasted only a very short time, the connections into the future were many. Included here are two songs by Roger that would later appear on the first **Birdsongs of the Mesozoic** record: "The Transformation of Oz" and "Winter's Dream" - the latter name changed to "Triassic, Jurassic, Cretaceous" by the time it graced **Birdsongs'** freshman release. Their friend **Rick Scott** who recorded this session and later became a member of **Birdsongs of the Mesozoic**, used the same Braun 1/2 track that **Martin Swope** would use for tape loops in **Mission of Burma**. And if Roger's adaptation of "The Rite of Spring" for **Birdsongs** was more ambitious than his arrangement of "Renard the Fox", still, here is where that idea began.

By 1977 punk rock had kicked in, and Laurence (guitar) and Benjamin (alto sax) went back to their rock roots and joined the Detroit punk band **Destroy All Monsters** which included **Ron Ashton** from the Stooges and **Michael Davis** from the MC5. In 1979, Roger co-formed **Mission of Burma** in Boston, which went on to be influential on the indie rock movement.

Give this a listen. Music from a pivotal time period. That expanded not long afterwards.

## INDIVIDUAL MUSICIAN BIOS

**Roger Miller** is a guitarist, pianist, bassist, composer, singer, percussionist and occasional cornet player. He has been a band leader since 1967. His recordings have appeared on Ace of Hearts Records, SST, New Alliance, Forced Exposure, Cuneiform, Atavistic, Feeding Tube, World in Sound, Sublingual and Fun World. He has toured nationally since 1979 and internationally since 1998. His career officially began in 1979 when he co-founded the influential post-punk band **Mission of Burma** on guitar and vocals. They have a chapter in the bible of indie rock history "**Our Band Could be Your Life**", and their documentary "**Not a Photograph**" was listed in Huffington Post's 18 must-watch documentaries.. They folded in 1983 due to his tinnitus. He formed **Birdsongs of the Mesozoic** on piano in 1981 and continued in it until 1988. The group blended minimalism, classical, and rock. From 1983-1989 he began his **Maximum Electric Piano** work, utilizing prepared piano and loops. From 1989 until 1998 he released numerous records as leader, all very different from each other, on guitar or keyboards. In 1998 he joined the **Alloy Orchestra** on keyboards which continues to the present. Roger Ebert said "Alloy Orchestra is the best in the world at accompanying silent film". In 2002-2015 Mission of Burma reformed to high acclaim, and Roger split his touring time between Burma and Alloy. During this time he composed many soundtracks for documentary films, four which premiered at Sundance. In 2010 he began composing chamber music again and his compositions have been performed at New England Conservatory and elsewhere, continuing to the present. His first art installation, "**Transmuting the Prosaic**", showed at the Brattleboro Art Museum in 2020. He is currently working on his new looping-based music "**Dream Interpretations for Solo Electric Guitar Ensemble**." due for release in 2022 on Cuneiform.

### *New York Times:*

*"Miller is doing for the electric piano what Hendrix did for the guitar, creating a new vocabulary of electronic noises... but Mr. Miller's songs have jolts in all the right places."*

### *Boston Globe:*

*"Less a recital than a musical minefield... Miller is a man in constant motion, a one-man symphony."*

### *LA Weekly:*

*"A 21st Century mind trapped in a 20th Century body, Miller's white light/white heat 88s were like a cross between John Cale, Jimi Hendrix and John Cage."*

**For more information on Roger Miller, visit: [www.rogerclarkmiller.com](http://www.rogerclarkmiller.com)**

-

**Benjamin Miller** is a composer, songwriter, guitarist, saxophonist and singer. He has recorded for SST, New Alliance, World in Sound, Feeding Tube, Cherry Red, Radial, Living, Obsolete Units, Tiger Asylum, IDBI, Sublingual and Living Records. He has toured nationally and internationally. His career officially kicked off in 1977 on alto saxophone in the art-punk band **Destroy All Monsters**, alongside members of the Stooges and MC5. Through-out the 1980's he played guitar and composed in post-punk bands and minimalist conceptual ensembles. Benjamin lived in Chicago during the '90s, finishing art school and playing multiphonic guitar in **Dirty Old Man River**. In 2003 he moved to New York City and toured the east coast and internationally on guitar with **The Glenn Branca Ensemble**. He toured Europe in **Franck Vigroux's Ruines** as vocalist, and as a solo artist playing multiphonic guitar, saxophone and electronics. In 2006, "Sun of Water, Sea of Light" by his band **Third Border**, was selected as 1 of 48 releases in the Alternative Rock genre to be nominated for the Grammys. He managed NYC's **Full Moon Audio Visual Series** presenting avant-garde video and live music. Ben developed a unique method of composition based on the sequence of intervals which paved the way for two symphonies written for his **Sensorium Saxophone Orchestra**. SSO features eleven saxophonists, two drummers and a bassist. He has worked with the renowned **Anne Carson**, **Carol Novack** and **Christine Hum** supplying live sound design on his Multiphonic Guitar for a live performance with dance and poetry. Ben now lives in Detroit, and leads his group **Porcelain Hammer** playing stereo guitar and vocal, with double bass, cello, violin, drum kit and tablas, and he performs with his brother Laurence in the avant-noise group **EMPOOL**.

### *New York Times:*

*"... the electric surges in Benjamin Miller's score threaten to push past séance into horror-movie territory. Yet the way that a chaotic force seems to break through the classicism of the dancers' Cunningham training is a fit analogue for the way that grief breaks through Ms. (Anne) Carson's erudite attempt to contain it."*

### *Village Voice:*

*"...fully embracing the spectral melodies and otherworldly timbres that emerge in multi-instrument settings..."*

### *Detroit Metro Times:*

*"If new expressionists closed their eyes and painted what they saw then Ben Miller must be taping shut his ears and playing what he hears; blood thrashing through arteries, nerves popping, synapses burning...doors knocking, feet bounding up echoed stairways..."*

**For more information on Benjamin Miller, visit: [www.benmiller.info](http://www.benmiller.info)**

-

**Laurence Miller** is a composer, singer, guitarist, clarinetist, keyboardist, drummer and filmmaker. He has recorded for SST, New Alliance, Cherry Red, World in Sound, Feeding Tube, Sublingual, IDBI, La La, Birdcage and Farfetched Records. From 1976-1978 he led **Empool**, a proto-noise band which often used records in their concerts, predating plunderphonics. His career officially kicked off in 1977 on guitar in the art-punk band **Destroy All Monsters**, alongside members of the Stooges and MC5. Through-out the 80's and 90's Laurence played guitar and sang in his unique brand of punk-pop and experimental bands. He was co-leader of **M3** which featured his guitar playing and drumming prominently. And his theatrical avant-garde ensemble **Larynx Zillion's Novelty Shop** raised eyebrows when-ever it performed. His experimental films showed at film festivals with his ambient scores, and he has worked as a children's performer, a.k.a. "Mr. Laurence", writing fanciful originals. He created the children's variety show "**The Enchanted Green Tree Fort**", a handful of award winning music videos, and finished off with his musical film 'Growing Grapes for the Future', based on the proposed prophetic properties of a raisin. Laurence currently performs with his brother Benjamin in the avant-noise group Empool.

***Guitar Player Magazine:***

“(M3)... is one of the richest guitar albums to emerge this year!

***Detroit Metro Times:***

“...best local release of the year!..”

***Ann Arbor News:***

“... \*\*\*\*. Four Stars ... David Bowie at his most glam and experimental. The Novelty Shop's music really is unique. It's about time for this man to get his due.” (*March 1994*)

***The American Music Express:***

“...(Laurence Miller's) "Headstone" has all the mole markings of dark Residents material, the piece travels through some ancient, underground funeral procession, and it's the one song that transcends all the others...”

**For more information on Laurence Miller, visit: [www.laurencebondmiller.com](http://www.laurencebondmiller.com)**

-

**Jack Waterstone** is an alto saxophone player and composer. He met the Miller brothers while studying music at Thomas Jefferson College in Michigan in 1975 where Hyperpianist Denman Maroney was their excellent teacher. Jack played in both incarnations of the **Fourth World Quartet**. He currently plays in the **Waterstone Duo** and is a piano tuner in the greater Detroit area.

**For more information on Jack Waterstone, visit: [www.waterstonemusic.com](http://www.waterstonemusic.com)**